

Series: **God is...So What?**

Today's Title: **"God is Spirit"**

October 2, 2022 – *Select Passages* – Sermon 7 of 16

Objective: To help people know God is spirit and how this truth impacts our life.

Opening prayer

We live in a culture that is dominated by secularism.

It's controlled by a view of life which is indifferent to, often outright rejects, or marginalizes religion, religious obligations, and religious institutions – such as churches.

However, it is interesting, that being 'spiritual' is considered to be a positive personal trait.

If you're a 'spiritual' person you are seen as someone who is deeper – more reflective – more aware of your inner self – and the inner-self of others.

But being 'spiritual' is a self-defined term in our culture.

Each person gets to define what this means for them.

This is – in part - why this is viewed in a positive light.

In a secular culture anything which highlights individual choice and preference is preferred over things such as objective truth or universal principles of right and wrong.

In fact, more and more younger people identify as being 'spiritual' as opposed to being 'religious.'

They want spirituality – without religion.

They see the shallowness of materialism – so they’re looking for something more out of life than stuff – so they’re pursuing the non-material part of life – the spiritual part.

Question: *Can we (people) pursue the spiritual side of life without Jesus?*

Can we become ‘spiritual’ without the God of the Bible?

Yes, we can pursue spiritual things outside of God – outside of Jesus – but those would not be good spiritual things.

Ephesians 6:12

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

It sounds overly simplistic – but the spiritual reality is there is God – and evil.

God – and sin.

God – and the Devil.

There are no in-between deities that occupy the spiritual space between God and the Devil.

There are not many paths to God.

Can we pursue the spiritual side of life without Jesus – without the God of the Bible?

NO.

Trying to be spiritual without pursuing God only leaves you with the options and of spiritual darkness and spiritual forces of evil.

There is only 1 way to God – 1 way to be redeemed and reconciled to God from your sin – through Jesus Christ and His atoning death and resurrection.

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Jesus was very clear.

This was part of the problem the religious establishment had with Him.

He was too clear for them.

They liked to muddy the spiritual waters a bit – that way they could define the terms in ways they liked – ways that lined their pockets and kept them in control.

But Jesus cut through all the spiritual murkiness – and brought light and clarity to the spiritual landscape.

Matthew 12:30 – Jesus is speaking

“Whoever is not with Me is against Me...”

Since pursuing God is a spiritual pursuit – it is good for us to understand more fully who / what God is.

This is the intent of our current series – to know God more fully by understanding what He has revealed about Himself

through creation – and through His self-revelation in the Bible.

But we're also making sure we understand why these truths about God's attributes – His perfections matter.

So What? Why are these things important in your life?

Today we're looking at a reality of God that has multiple implications and applications in our life.

God is spirit.

The Westminster Confession of Faith is a document written in the 1640's at Westminster Abbey – where Queen Elizabeth's funeral was recently held.

The Confession of Faith was written by a group of 151 theologians.

In the section describing God, it starts with this:

“There is but one only, (Deut. 6:4, 1 Cor. 8:4–6) living, and true God, (1 Thess. 1:9, Jer. 10:10) who is infinite in being and perfection, (Job 11:7–9, Job 26:14) a most pure spirit, (John 4:24) invisible, (1 Tim. 1:17) without body, parts,”

(<https://westminsterstandards.org/westminster-confession-of-faith/>)

When we say God is spirit – it means He has no material part to His existence.

He is wholly non-material.

We, on the other hand, are spirit and material – body and soul.

But God is spirit.

The pre-incarnate Jesus was spirit, but He took on flesh – He took on a body at His incarnation.

Now, Jesus has an eternal, glorified body – a glorious reality and reminder of God’s love for us and the lengths He was willing to go to redeem us back to Himself.

For God to be omnipresent, He must be spirit.

Spirit has no physical dimensions.

Key passage is **John 4:24**, Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman at the well.

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Definition: “God's spirituality means that God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence.”

(Systematic Theology, by Wayne Grudem, p. 187-188)

It is difficult to give many details as to what it means to exist as ‘spirit’ only.

Science cannot study ‘spirit’ – since it has no physical or material properties.

Science can’t verify ‘spirit’ – for the same reason.

‘Spirit’ can’t be tested or examined for study.

But that doesn’t mean we don’t know the importance of God being spirit.

Science can't tell us much about this topic – but the Bible certainly has a great deal to say on it and why this matters so much in our life.

Apply it... So what?

The truth about God – His perfection that He is spirit is rich in application – it is rich in the insight it gives us into life.

Since God is spirit...

Since He is spirit, I have 5 things to share with you – 5 things that we learn about God – about ourselves – about life – from this truth about the nature of God's existence.

1. Nothing resembles God in all creation.

General Revelation means we can learn about God through the creation.

Romans 1:20

“For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”

We can learn about God from General Revelation – but there is nothing in the creation that resembles Him because the creation is physical, material, and God is spirit.

Throughout history, different cultures looked to the creation – the sun, moon, and stars, or things here on

earth – and they created gods from those things – or based on those things.

They worshiped the sun.

They made gold or silver statues of men, women, or animals.

They carved images out of wood – and bowed down to them.

In more extreme cases they sacrificed their children to these gods (which brings me back to the introduction and there is either God or evil).

In **Isaiah 44:14-18** God is mocking the logic of a man cutting down a tree and:

- Using part of the tree for firewood to keep him warm...
- He uses the fire to cook his food...
- He takes some of the wood and carves an idol and worships it saying, *“Deliver me, for you are my god!”*

How insulting to the 1 true God who actually made the tree – to worship the tree as god!!!

This is why the 1st 2 commandments of the 10 commandments focus on this issue.

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. No idols or any kind of images for worship!

Exodus 20:4

“You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea.”

This is because God is spirit.

He is not material – not physical matter.

To reduce God to physical matter is belittling – it is a reduction.

God is greater than all of His creation.

He cannot be represented or resembled by anything in His creation.

Any attempt to do this short-changes the person and nature of God.

This is why Grudem, in his definition we read earlier, said God, “...*is more excellent than any other kind of existence.*”

God...being spirit...helps us understand He is greater than any part of His creation.

2. Jesus helps us see God.

The incarnation was an event in history unlike any other.

God – who is spirit – took on flesh.

Because of His love for us – and our need to be saved from ourselves – from our sin – God had decreed from before the foundations of the world to become one of us so He could give Himself as the 1-time and forever sacrifice which has enough value to atone for the sins of the world.

Since God is spirit – He is unseen – invisible.
But when the 2nd person of the triune God took on
flesh – God was among us – He dwelt among us in
visible form (John 1:14a).

Colossians 1:15

“Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.”

The ultimate purpose of the incarnation was the
redemption of humanity, but another purpose was to
reveal God to us.

Jesus is the fullest, most complete revelation of the
Father.

Hebrews 1:2-3

“...He (God) has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the
heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.
He (Jesus) is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact
imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word
of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down
at the right hand of the Majesty on high...”

This was not an easy concept / reality for the disciples
to understand. The fact that God – was a person –
God-incarnate – the God-Man – these were not easy
truths.

John 14:8-9

Philip said to Him (Jesus), “Lord, show us the Father, and it is
enough for us.”

Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’”?

It took a few centuries to truly get a handle on these truths.

Nicene Creed – 325 A.D.

*“And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of the same essence as the Father.”*

3. We need to prioritize our *spirit*, not our *body*.

A very practical application for us relates to our own body and how we should view the body.

Our modern culture is body-obsessed.

The body and the material adornments – dominate our thoughts and the soul gets very little attention.

For the majority in the culture, physical appearance, hairstyles, beauty trends, fashion – even our possessions – these things hold our attention and garner much of our daily energies.

For the Christian, we should have a balanced view and practice in this area.

The body is not bad – it's not evil.

Jesus took on flesh and He has a body for eternity – and we will have a glorified body for eternity.

So, we shouldn't neglect our body.

On the contrary, the Bible tells us to care for our body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

We should be good stewards of the body God has given us.

But instead of being good stewards, we are obsessed with the body.

We tend to glorify the importance of the body and minimize the importance of the spirit.

More so than our physical bodies, God's image is reflected through our spirits.

This is why Paul told Timothy...

1 Timothy 4:7-8

“Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”

Since God is spirit, this should help us prioritize our spirit – over our body.

4. The invisible God has accommodated us.

Since God is spirit, this makes it more challenging for us to know Him – because we can't see Him or experience Him through our senses.

Once again – Grudem's definition states this:

"...is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses..."

1 Timothy 6:16

"...whom no one has ever seen or can see."

Hebrews 11:27

"Moses...kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible."

John 1:18

"No one has ever seen God..."

1 Timothy 1:17

"To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God..."

Being fully aware of this, God, throughout the ages, has revealed Himself in various ways.

Theophanies – appearances of God in physical form (pillar of fire / cloud – burning bush – audible voice – as a person or angel).

He has also accommodated us through various anthropomorphisms throughout the Bible.

Many times, God uses these descriptions to describe Himself – even though He has no body – no body parts – no physical or material parts at all!

The most thorough way He has accommodated Himself to our physical realm and experience has been through the incarnation – and through the Bible in which He has revealed Himself to us.

The invisible God...unknowable God...has made Himself known.

5. We must worship in *spirit* and *truth*.

Knowing God is spirit has implications for how we worship.

John 4:23-24

“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The context for these verses is Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman at the well.

As she started to realize she was talking to a very unique person, probably a prophet of God, she began to talk about the ongoing intense disagreement between the Samaritans and the Jewish people.

*The Samaritans had their own temple on Mount Gerizim
– and the Jewish people had theirs in Jerusalem.*

Jesus' answer to her was based in truth that God is spirit.

1. Because God is spirit – our worship must be in spirit and truth.

Jesus says, “...the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.” Meaning, those who worship God must worship according to God's desires, not their own personal desires.

Our worship must be spiritual – from our own spirit – not simply from physical routines or rituals.

Our worship must be truthful – meaning we must worship God according to the self-revealed truth about God and according to the truth of the Gospel.

It must be God-centric and Christ-centric.

2. Because God is spirit, the location of worship is not important.

vs. 21 – “the hour is coming when neither on this mountain (Gerizim) nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.”

Since God is spirit – since He is omnipresent – He is everywhere.

There is nowhere that God is not.

So, the physical location of our worship is not the most important thing.

In the church, it is important for us to gather together to worship, but we can worship in a different place than this building.

God is not confined to a space.

As long as we worship Him in spirit and in truth - we can worship Him wherever we are...

Because God is spirit.

Closing prayer